304 occasion calls for festivities that last for one month, and it is repeated every seven or eight years in each village.

As for girls, they undergo the barbarous operation of excision when they are from eight to twelve years old. The girls' excision is not performed at the same time as the boys' circumcision, but in another year. The attendant festivities also last for one month.

The girls are operated on by a woman, the boys by a man.

It is not the labia of the girls that are severed, but the clitoris itself. Why do this? My informants did not know. Is it to make the weaker sex less susceptible to sensual pleasures? No. It would rather be, my informants tell me, to facilitate the physical union of men and women. This would also be the aim of the boys' circumcision. But my informants were not sure.

88 304 171 We might note that among the Mossi, as in certain other parts of West Africa, for example in Guinea (but not among the Gourounsi, where boys are not circumcised /598/ and girls are often excised at birth), circumcision and excision are combined with an initiation, that is to say, are closely connected with the education and instruction of young men and girls. One takes advantage of the circumcision or excision to complete, so to speak, the instruction and education of youth.

881 304 Marc has the following to say about the subject (op. cit., p. 150). "The circumcision of boys takes place around the age of twelve and occasions important festivities. There seems to be a sort of initiation ceremony, which is performed in rather mysterious circumstances. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find out exactly what does take place."

000 We close our survey of Mossi religion by referring the reader to Appendix 33 /not translated/ for a few complementary details on the Moslem question in the territory. We have also concluded our description of Mossi society as a whole. In order to gain a deeper understanding of its origins as far as the conquering population is concerned, we shall now have a glance at the Foutanké social type in the following chapter /not translated/.

593 The Moro Naba, after he has been notified by the family council,
684 pronounces the forfeiture of paternal authority. In case of incest, the guilty party was driven out of the territory.

593 Duties of children toward their parents. —The children owe obedience to their father and mother. They also owe them respect.

Their labor obligations are distributed among the fields of the work group, the father's private fields, the mother's small private plots, and their own little plots. Naturally they work most on the large fields belonging to the work group.

304 Circumcision. —Circumcision is performed at the age of 13 or 14.
●881 It takes place in the month of December, hence during the dry, cool season. At this time the children are not needed to help in the fields, as they are in the winter season. This is also the case in the hot, dry season, but at that time the wounds would heal less quickly. This leaves the dry, cold season, which is excellently suited to the treatment of the circumcised, a time when the children have nothing whatever to do and the grown-ups very little.

304 Circumcision is performed on a certain number of children at the
621 same time. When a small village is involved, all the children in the village are circumcised at once. When a large village is involved,
593 the children in each quarter are circumcised together. The children
881 themselves ask their big brother if they may be circumcised when they feel that they have reached a suitable age for this operation. The big brother decides and says yes or no.

304 The children also set the exact date for the circumcision and go to
326 the man who has charge of the operation to make the arrangements.
881 In Yatenga, as a rule, he is a blacksmith (at Ouahigouya, for example, from the quarter of the Baloum-Naba). Sometimes, however, non-blacksmiths, either Foulsé or Mossi, perform the operation. When a performer of operations dies, he is replaced by someone who knows how to circumcise, either a brother or a son of the deceased or someone from another family.

304 Circumcision is not performed in the evening or at night, as happens
881 among other Blacks of West Africa, but at six o'clock in the morning. A particularly kind man among the people of the quarter or of the village has been chosen by the children who are to be circumcised. He wakes them up on that morning and takes them to the man who is to perform the operation. Big brothers accompany their younger brothers, but the father and mother do not witness the operation and are not even

304 notified, nor are the family heads. The women, girls, and other
881 boys (those who are not to be circumcised) cannot witness the operation, and this is actually forbidden to them. Circumcision is performed in the bush, 500 meters from the village, in the open air by the side of a tree. There is no location determined by custom, however, and a spot is chosen each year at will.

The man who is performing the operation ties the tip of the patient's prepuce with a string /259/, and the boy squats down. A small block of wood is placed under the penis, and the tip of the penis rests upon it. The man places a small iron cleaver on the spot marked by the string, and deals it a sharp, neat blow with a stone, so the blade will
[752] make a clean cut. Naturally, a copious hemorrhage ensues. It is first allowed to take its course for a while, and then the man stanches it by putting dust upon the wound. Each child is circumcised in turn. When the operations are over, the man who was chosen, the nané, leads the circumcised boys to another spot, 500 meters from the village, under a tree. He has the heads of the children's families notified (and they notify in turn the children's parents) that the boys have just been circumcised and beg forgiveness for having done this without telling them. Family heads, fathers, and mothers naturally forgive in accordance with custom. Meanwhile, the boys are taking care of themselves. By tying a string around the body, they lift the penis so its tip will not rub against the thighs. The string holds another cord which lifts the penis in a horizontal position. To maintain it in this position, they also place under the penis a little piece of forked wood, the tip of which rests on the testicles. They do not dress the wounds as yet. This will not be done until three days have passed.

304 Meanwhile, the men of the circumcised boys' compounds build
342 two sheds in Mossi style (low, on forks, with a thick straw roof), one
881 outside the village where the young men are, the other inside the village in front of the compound of the nané. Food for the circumcised boys is provided by their families. Each mother makes sarabou for her son, but the mothers do not bring it themselves, for, being women, they are not permitted to see the newly-circumcised boys. They send the sarabou through some boy who has already been circumcised. In the evening when it is quite dark, around seven o'clock, the nané brings the children to sleep under the shed erected in the village. Before daybreak in the morning they will, like shadows, leave again for the bush.

304 824 752 881 At the end of three days, the nané sends a few circumcised boys of preceding years, rasamba, to look in the bush for bark of the néré, karite, n'pékou, and the n'kouna trees. He has them boiled in a large canari and then allows the water to cool until it is lukewarm. Then he calls the bankonsé (this is the name of the newly circumcised boys in Mossi, bankonka in the singular, bankonsé in the plural) and orders them to wash their penes in this water. At the same time he has the leaves of the kantoboga boiled. This is an aloe-type plant of which we have already spoken /not translated/. When this washing is done, the bankonsé smear their penes with cow butter (karite butter is avoided because it is believed to soften the penis and to make it less virile), and then, after cutting kantoboga leaves into pieces, they wrap them around the member, forming a sort of sheath. These leaves are wrapped with cotton thread so they will stay in place. /260/

From then on, the same procedure is repeated every morning and every evening. The bankonsé undo the bandage, wash with néré or karite water, apply fresh butter and new kantoboga leaves. This is done until the wounds are healed.

Néré water, once prepared, keeps for seven days. The supply of kantoboga leaves is renewed only when there are no more on hand.

304 883 881 The bankonsé do not stir for the first three days. From the third to the tenth day, they begin to take a little exercise. For example, they fetch whatever water they need. At the end of ten days, they walk about in the bush, fetch firewood which they stack in piles, and do the same with straw. In the open country they chase hares, rats, and snakes with sticks, in short, all the small game which is to be found there. When there is water in the vicinity, they fish for frogs and fish. They also pick berries from bushes, etc.

[292] Their clothing consists of a kind of skirt which goes down to their ankles and which is made of old garments torn to shreds, of frayed cotton bands.

In the evening from time to time the bankonsé have tom-tom sessions near the shed where they sleep in the village. The griot /drummers, minstrels/ come and play on their instruments. Since this is done at night, men, women, and children may attend.

304 425 881 The bankonsé are entitled to ransack the bush and to take everything they find: chickens, goats, sheep, cotton, etc. The owners have no right to object, but this applies only to small livestock. The bankonsé have no right to larger animals and horses.

•881 304 It seems that among the Mossi and Foulsé, the nané does not give moral lessons to the bankonsé, contrary to the procedure among the Bambara where the custom has been preserved.

At the end of a month, the bankonsé are healed. The families are notified, and each household prepares a new pair of breeches and a boubou /robe/ for the young circumcised boys.

On the evening preceding the day when they make their reappearance in the village, around seven o'clock, the skirts of the circumcised boys are heaped into a pile and burned. The following morning the nané leads the bankonsé to the well to wash from head to toe before donning their new clothes. Before leaving camp, the firewood gathered by the boys is distributed among their mothers and the straw among their family heads. The nané also keeps a certain amount for himself. This is his allowance, aside from his being provided with food throughout the month, along with the circumcised boys, by the latter's relatives. (On the other hand, he had to remain separated from his [833] wife, for there is a superstition that should he approach her, the bankonsé would fail to heal.) When the distribution of straw and firewood has been completed, our circumcised boys make their triumphal entry into the village at seven o'clock in the morning in their /261/ beautiful new garments. To the sound of the tom-tom, they visit all the compounds, calling on everyone. Gifts are offered to them [431] (kola nuts, cowries, peanuts, cotton, dolo, etc.). When the visits are completed, the celebration is over, and the bankonsé return home. [551] They may henceforth be called by name again; this could not be done during their retreat.

Excision. ——Girls are excised when they are eight, nine, or ten, depending on how mature they are. As with the boys, this is done during the month of December, but instead of being carried out on a village or quarter basis, it is done on a compound basis. The operation itself is performed by an old woman who knows how to do it. It is not she, however, who watches over the girls afterwards, but an old woman of the compound who has them under her supervision for twenty-five or thirty days. During that time, the girls are kept apart, sleeping in their guardian's hut and taking care of themselves. As soon as they can walk, they go and gather wood in the bush for her, they fetch water, spin cotton, etc. At nightfall, they sing in chorus, clapping their hands in rhythm.

When they are healed, they deck themselves with all the bracelets and jewelry they can find in the compound. Thus dressed up and

881 adorned, they go in a group to greet the mother of each one in turn,
304 but they do not go out into the village like the boys.

In short, among the Mossi and Foulsé of Yatenga, circumcision and excision are not characterized by the intervention of any powerful religious society like the komo among the Bambara and among the Mandé in general. Nor do we find here those picturesque details which are so strikingly present among the Malinké of Upper Guinea and even more so among the tribes of Lower Guinea (Soussou /Susu/, Landouman /Landuma/, etc.) (3). Nevertheless, circumcision is

3. On this topic, see André Arcin, La Guinée française /French Guinea/, pp. 438-446, and Noirot, A travers le Foutah-Djallon et le Bambouk /Across the Fouta Djallon and Bambouk/, concerning the Landouman.

important in the lives of the Mossi and Foulsé of Yatenga, because it transforms the child into a young man.

591 After circumcision. —Following circumcision or excision, only marriage remains. When a girl married, as we have seen above, she leaves her compound and goes to her husband's residence. The young man, however, remains in his own compound. He is given a cabin, a hut, for himself and his bride if there is one available and empty, or a new one is built for him. When he has a child, he builds a hut near his own for the young mother and son, unless he is given another one which is available.

884 Emancipation and coming of age. —One can scarcely speak of emancipation and coming of age among the Mossi. A man comes of age when he marries, but he always remains a minor to some extent vis-à-vis his work group, his compound, and his family. Emancipation /262/ and coming of age are French concepts which have no equivalent among the Mossi in particular and the Sudanese in general. One might acknowledge, however, as does Vadier in his monograph on Yatenga, a sort of coming of age around the age of 17 or 18 for purposes of buying and selling.

429 Guardianship. —When a Mossi dies, his wives and children revert to his oldest brother. If there are many wives and children, they are apportioned among the brothers of the deceased. The head of the family presides over the distribution.